

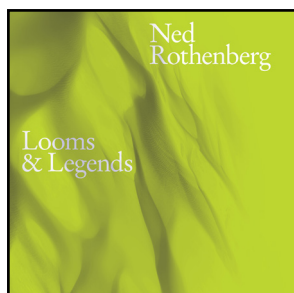
minute (and change) length. The interwoven vistas of pulsing drones, augmented by Laplante's use of the musical tuning system Just Intonation, and the fiery bowing and majestic melodies heard throughout, lends an unpredictable aura at every turn. All through-composed with nothing improvised, the album requires repeated listens as resonant sound worlds, melodic directions and tonal shifts await to be discovered.

The Golden Lock shows Laplante at the top of the composer game and a bandleader who can move the emotional needle no matter the instrumentation or style. Unlike *String Quartets*, this recording finds Laplante on tenor, leading a lithe group consisting of Erika Dohi (piano), Charles Overton (harp), Lizzie Burns (bass) and Eduardo Leandro (percussion). Those familiar with the mind-altering complexities and piercing squawks of Laplante's tenor quartet Battle Trance are in for a surprise. The moment Dohi's simply gorgeous and touching piano themes ring in the fourteen and a half-minute epic "The Golden Lock I-II", the sense is palpable: this is a significant creative shift away from the group Laplante is arguably best known for. As he writes in the album's liner notes about the songwriting process: "I felt vulnerable enough to compose simple melodies and harmonies without feeling the need to demonstrate technical skill to prove myself as a musician or to feel self-worth." Comprised of seven individual movements, this set is, by far, Laplante's most accessible recording to date. Yet he can move you to tears both technically and, as he does here, simplistically. The velvety and inviting sound and next-level passages Laplante coaxes from his tenor on the album opener, complemented by Dohi's exquisite piano lines and the twinkling strum and pluck of Overton's harp, is pure gold.

Waterfall, by the collaborative quartet Sun & Rain, is *The Golden Lock*'s polar opposite in the technically challenging sense. It will also elicit a different type of reaction: falling into a trance-like state from its head-spinning labyrinth of rigorously-placed forms. Laboriously composed over six years, Laplante, alongside Nathaniel Morgan (alto), Andrew Smiley (guitar) and Jason Nazary (drums) assemble miraculous sonic building blocks that perennially evolve and mutate as each player rains down their harmonic and abstract tones and textures into the pile. Improbably, all of the trippy sounds the foursome gush from their instruments coalesce, creating an interlocking braid that teems with drone, psychedelia, metal and jazz leanings.

Taken together, these three extraordinary albums showcase Travis Laplante's prodigious talents.

For more info visit newamrecords.org, newfocusrecordings.com and outofyourheadrecords.com. Laplante is at Roulette Oct. 29. See Calendar.



Looms & Legends
Ned Rothenberg (Pyroclastic)
by Stuart Broomer

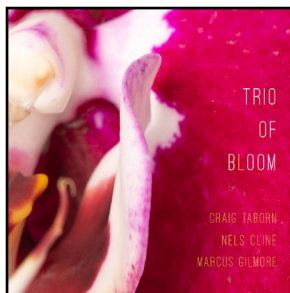
Ned Rothenberg is a master of contrasting woodwinds: alto saxophone, Bb and A clarinets (both in the soprano range but the latter with a darker, more resonant, lower register) and the Japanese shakuhachi, all heard on his latest release *Looms & Legends*. He's also a visionary explorer of technique and sound, regularly crossing stylistic boundaries. Listening to the mysterious play

of this solo program, other reed masters come to mind. The sheer sonic richness and contrasts between the saxophone and clarinets invoke Eric Dolphy and Marty Ehrlich (Rothenberg's co-producer here), while the masterful circular breathing and near-polyphonic effects call up Rothenberg's collaborations with Evan Parker. The 14 individual tracks range from the minute-long "Brief Tall Tale" and a two-minute "Flurry", both suggestive of Dolphy's register leaps and timbres, to "Urgency", an eight-minute exploration of the saxophone's inner and outer lives, its whispered mysteries, split-tones and resonances, and subtle modulations from one voice to another.

The opening "Dance Above" (clarinet) suggests all the mystery to come, with its circular breathing and instances of multiphonics. "Denali" (alto) engages multiple "extended" techniques, including circular breathing and some multiphonics. "Resistance Anthem" (alto) is played in a more conventional but still distinctive voice, with a liquid lyricism. "How You Slice It" (clarinet) floats through registers with a magisterial ease, matching high trills to simultaneous reverberating lows, turning contrasting registers into an unearthly duet, a multiplicity of voices suggesting interpenetrating dimensions. "Plun Jah" (clarinet) is a mutating foray into the instrument's possibilities for timbral shifts, with phrases landing on lower pitches, each shifting in tone. "Fra Gile" (clarinet) is a more extended exploration, modulating between external and internal, social and private. There's also the motivic development of "Inner Briation" (clarinet) and "Tender Hooks" (alto), reaching deep into each instrument's distinct legacy. The beautiful "Bellkeybell" (alto), too, moves between Rothenberg and the interior and exterior voices of what he's playing.

The recording's final piece, Thelonious Monk's anthemic "Round Midnight", is a riveting meditation, realized on shakuhachi. Rothenberg's expressive, wavering voice exalts a melody already etched in one's mind, and he carries its special mingling of minor-key mystery and luminous promise into another dimension, its quavering quartertones and evasive murmurs further embellishing Monk's original harmonies.

For more info visit pyroclasticrecords.com. The album release concert is at Roulette Oct. 2. See Calendar.



Trio of Bloom
Craig Taborn, Nels Cline, Marcus Gilmore
(Pyroclastic)
by Ken Waxman

While the jazz world may or may not be clamoring for a Craig Taborn prog rock/funk record, *Trio of Bloom* is probably the closest they'll get to it, because the pianist, known for his mostly acoustic work with everyone from Mat Maneri to Roscoe Mitchell, fully utilizes a variety of electronic keyboards on this album's 11 tracks.

Taborn couldn't have picked better partners since both Nels Cline and Marcus Gilmore straddle the rock/funk/jazz divide. Guitarist Cline may be part of Wilco, but has also worked with Vinny Golia, and drummer Gilmore has been involved with players as different as Vijay Iyer and Robert Glasper. Electric oscillations don't mean sounds have to be obvious, however. On the all-improvised title track for instance, the percussionist's bell-tree and reverberating spring-like textures, enhanced with electronic whooshes, whiz

and wiggle beside a moody melody created by guitar and keyboard stops, backed by drum shuffles. Gilmore may be a master of prestissimo thumps and sustained press rolls, but he expresses them with the same sophisticated facility on "Queen King" where elevated electric harpsichord splashes accompany Cline's slide from steel guitar-like licks to echoing flanges as on "Nightwhistlers". The latter finds Taborn's processed glissandi so closely doubling the guitarist's bluesy echoes and rock-like whammies that it's difficult to establish from which instrument supercharged phrases emanate.

The album isn't all controlled bombast either. "Diana" is a respectful acoustic reading of the Wayne Shorter ballad where Cline's rounded tones sound like 1950s guitarist Johnny Smith. "Bend It" (by legendary Norwegian guitarist Terje Rypdal) revisits the '70s fusion era in a good way as Cline's intricate string buzzes and detours are perfectly positioned within the doomy theme projected by synthesized keyboard swoops and hard, anything but monotonous, thumps from the drummer. The conclusion dissolves with an electronic drone.

Despite the affiliations perfected with the others on *Trio of Bloom*, Taborn isn't likely to neglect the germinations expressed in his other programs of straight-ahead, notated and pure improv. Yet in this trio he demonstrates that, with the right players, populist interpretations can be created with the same formulation and finesse as other sounds.

For more info visit pyroclasticrecords.com. Taborn is at Public Records Oct. 6 (with Ches Smith), The Stone at The New School Oct. 18 (with Henry Fraser) and Miller Theatre Oct. 28 (with Yarn/Wire). Cline is at Littlefield Oct. 1 (with Consentrik Quartet). See Calendar.